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Dr. Sherry
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The Meaning of an Education

People that have an education possess knowledge that will allow them to handle all environments and situations in a moral and adequate manner. People gain knowledge from experiences, and use that knowledge in the future to handle other situations. For example, when you were a kid you might have touched a hot stove. The knowledge you gain is that a stove hot, and you should not touch a stove. Through building this knowledge, one can eventually learn to handle most situations in an appropriate and ideal manner. In order to show how one builds and demonstrates their education, I am sharing three experiences of my life from the past, present, and future.

My Past

For my past experience, I chose to share the story of my kindergarten graduation. There was an experience I had during the ceremony in which I applied things I learned in class. One kid was crying and I used my prior knowledge to help diffuse the problem.

There I was, standing on a bright stage with my peers, smiling at an audience of parents that were smiling right back at us. To the left of me, our principle, Mrs. Suski, was speaking loudly to the audience behind an old podium that was almost as tall as her. "I am proud to announce, the Middletown kindergarten graduates of 2002¹!" Everyone in the audience got out of their chairs and began clapping. Knowing how proud my family must have been, my smile was brighter than ever. I finally finished kindergarten, and was ready to become a big kid.

As the ceremony continued, Mrs. Suski proceeded to call each student, name by name, to cross the stage and receive their kindergarten diploma. "Charles Baylor, Congratulations!.... Corey Fox, Congratulations!..." In the audience, I could see my mom and dad smiling and waving at me. But suddenly I heard a cry "WAHH!!" About seven kids over from me in my row, I noticed one of my peers crying. His face and shirt were blotched with snot and tears. We were standing in the back row, so no teachers or parents could see what was happening. Fortunately enough, I remembered what my teacher, Mrs. Golden, had taught me in class about the importance of helping my fellow neighbors. Heroically, I left my spot in line to help my peer. "What's wrong Cody?" I asked as I patted him on his shoulder. "I don't see my mommy!" he said choked up with emotion. I thought about how I would feel if I did not see my parents in the audience. My eyes opened wide as I realized the magnitude of the situation. "HURRY! GET MRS. GOLDEN!" My classmate whom was standing next to us sensed the seriousness of my tone and sprang into action. With his Velcro light-up shoes, he bolted off the stage to find our teacher to help. "Mrs. Golden! Cody is crying! Come help, quick!" he yelled in a panicked voice. Mrs. Golden did not hesitate to respond. She headed towards the scene as fast as she could in her

¹ Dialogue

high heels and long flowered dress that almost touched the floor.² As she made her way to the stage, I continued to comfort Cody as best as I could. Once again, I remembered something Mrs. Golden had taught me that could be useful. "Hey Cody. Why was six scared of seven?" I asked him. "I don't know. Why?" he responded softly. "Because seven ate nine!" I said laughingly. For a moment he was silent, probably because he was not so great at counting yet. But in a matter of seconds Cody cracked a smile, and shortly after that, he broke into laughter. Seconds later, Mrs. Golden arrives to notice I have already diffused the problem. Immediately after that, Cody's mother and father walked into the auditorium. I knew at that moment, the day was saved. Relieved, I proceeded to go back to my place in line, where I would await for my name to be honored.

After the ceremony, my parents and I were walking to meet with Mrs. Golden and Cody's family. I thought I might have been in trouble for running out of my spot in line during the ceremony. But as we approached them, I noticed they all had bright smiles on their faces, and they were looking at me. "Hey Doug! Thank you so much for helping Cody!" Cody's mother said to me. I smiled and gave a quick look at Mrs. Golden as I said, "No problem! I just did what I was taught to do."

By using all the things I have learned prior to that situation, I used my education to handle the situation in a proactive manner.

Present

For my present, I chose to share my experience of helping my roommate with his old drinking decisions. (Name has been changed) I applied experiences and information I have learned in my life in order to influence my roommate into making better choices.

It was an average weekend night in Elwell Hall, and my roommate Josh and I had just gotten to sleep. As always, sleeping did not last long before my other roommate, Dill, stumbled into the room, running into every chair and dresser in the room.³ It was the second semester, and this routine was starting to get almost too predictable. Jumping down from the comfort of my bunk-bed, it was not long until the stench of booze filled the air around me. "Josh! Help me out man!" I yelled over to the bed across the room. Josh poked his head up from his slumber, and quickly ran over to help me get Dill to his bed. It was just a regular Friday night. But that needed to change.

The next morning, I decided to talk to Dill about drinking more responsibly. Thinking there was nothing I could say that would completely stop his habits, I recalled tips from our freshman orientation that could help his situation. By the time Dill woke up, the sun was almost ready to set. "Good afternoon Dill!" I said jokingly as he slowly emerged from his bed. He looked pale and he was still wearing his polo shirt and jeans from the night before.⁴ "My head is killing me" he said softly with the scent of alcohol still on his breath. I told him the story of how

² Appearance

³ Action

⁴ Appearance

we helped him into bed the night before, and he had no recollection. "Did you eat anything yesterday? Did you at least drink any water?" I asked him in a concerned tone. He sat in silence but the regretful look in his face answered that question for me. This was not a good situation, and Mrs. Golden from Kindergarten taught me well about helping my peers. For the next few minutes, we discussed things he could do to drink more responsibly. Drink water, eat something, pace yourself, pretty much all the basic drinking safety tips. "I already know all this man. You don't need to tell me." he would respond in denial. I realized he did not see his drinking as a problem, but I knew a story that would maybe change his mind.

I told Dill about my friend's alcoholic father that started drinking heavily in college. By his junior year at Shippensburg, he flunked out of school and continued his obsessive drinking habits. Two weeks after his sons 14th birthday, he had one drink too many and passed away. By the end of the story, Dill was in silence and staring at the floor motionless. I looked at him and said, "I care about you, and it hurts me and Josh to see you going down that road." "I only drink because the weekdays stress me out." he replied defending himself.⁵ Knowing how foolish of an excuse that was, I scavenged my desk for a slip of a paper I knew might help him. "If you ever are stressed out, talk it out with me or Josh." I said as I handed him the slip of paper. As he read the words on the paper, he sat in silence. *"If you know someone who tries to drown their sorrows, you might tell them sorrows know how to swim."* Thinking that everything I was saying was a waste of time, I stomped out of the room and dropped the conversation for good.

The following Friday, Josh and I readied ourselves for bed expecting to be woken up again in the night. While climbing into bed, the door unexpectedly opened, and Dill walked into the room. "Look who can actually walk straight on a Friday night for once" Josh said jokingly. "I quit drinking last week. I realized there are better and more productive things I could do with my time." Dill said with a smirk on his face. Till this day Dill still has not had another drink. Instead, we spend our Friday nights hanging out and enjoying a restful, and uninterrupted night of sleep. Mrs. Golden would be proud.

Using my knowledge from experiences I had in the past, I altered the choices of a person and improved the quality of both of our lives.

Future

It was a clear and sunny day, but in my perspective I saw nothing but dreary clouds and rain.⁶ Sitting in the back of that church, it did not surprise me much that hundreds of people were here. "We are gathered here today, to remember the life of one of our town's greatest women. Mrs. Golden lived a long life, and positively impacted each of our lives in one way or another" the pastor said as he sadly gazed at the audience. In the front row, I could see a familiar elderly man sitting alone with tears shedding down his face. Remembering back to kindergarten, I realized he was Mrs. Golden's husband.

⁵ Dialogue

⁶ Point of View

After the service, I saw the man was still sitting in the front alter all alone. His head was looking to the ground and his face was wet with tears. “Mr. Golden, I know you do not recognize me, but I was one of Mrs. Golden’s students” I said as I sat down next to him. He sat in silence, still staring at the floor. “I can’t imagine how difficult this loss must be for you. Mrs. Golden has made a giant impact on my life, and I am sure she did the same for yours” I said softly. “Thank you for your respects. But she was the last person I had in the world” he said in a weak voice. This man was elderly and weak. How could I let that man be lonely? What if he died without a family? I reached in my pocket and pulled out a business card with my contact information on it. “Mrs. Golden has impacted my life just as much as the rest of my family. The least I could do is return the favor to her husband. Call me anytime you want. Come over on the holidays for dinner. You are not alone, we could be your family.” He lifted his head up again, this time with a smile on his face. ⁷“Thank you”, he said as he took the business card.

The next few years Mr. Golden attended all of our family events. In the end, I was able to help person’s life, while gaining a new friend.

In this experience, I used my prior knowledge to enhance the quality of a broken man’s life. Mrs. Golden had taught me to help my fellow neighbors. Dill had taught me to make the best of a situation (win-win). Using these two pieces of knowledge, I was able to help Mr. Golden and gain a new friend.

Conclusion

Through each experience, I gained a new piece of knowledge. Eventually that knowledge builds until one becomes fully educated. Educated people possess the skills necessary to handle all situations in their lives in the best way possible. In the end, I was able to turn a sad and depressed moment into something extraordinary that changed a man’s life for the better. Imagine what other great things can come from an educated person.

⁷ Action